



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE BIBLICAL WORLD

VOLUME XLVII

MAY 1916

NUMBER 5

THE GOOD SENSE OF JESUS

We shall never fully understand Jesus until we stop looking at him through the atmosphere of a conventional piety. We have so veneered his thought with theological terms and confessional formulas that we have failed to look at it with the same objectivity—if academic patois may be permitted—with which we look, for example, at the teaching of Socrates. As a result we too frequently have failed to grasp its essential sanity.

In consequence we have underrated the good sense of Jesus.

Sometimes this has resulted from our blind disregard of conditions in the midst of which his teachings were given and the persons to whom they were addressed. We have erected his directions for particular needs and particular tasks and particular persons into general principles. When we have not been ready to follow the results of treating his words in this fashion, we have injured our consciences by casuistical evasions of our own conclusions. And a man's integrity is always at stake when he tries to make unwelcome moral ideals appear to be illegitimate.

The man who recognizes the authority of Jesus should see that he actually knows what the teachings of Jesus are. Exegesis is an admirable handmaid for piety.

Prejudice and practice are enemies of good sense in the case of Jesus as in that of other teachers. History has so built words and practices into the life of the world as to make it difficult to understand Jesus except as a divine idealist introducing ideals fit for heaven but impracticable on the earth. There could be no more serious mistake.

Take his teaching as to non-resistance, for example. It was not made by Jesus a creed for states, but for heralds of the coming Kingdom of God. But the good sense of the principle it involves

is axiomatic. Could there be anything more foolish than to attempt to spread brotherhood by force? You can of course spread a religion that promises salvation after death, by the sword. Mahomet did it; Charlemagne did it. But you cannot pound a feeling of fraternity into your fellow-men with a club or shoot love into them with a machine gun. The man who is to spread the news of the love of God who is a Father is thoroughly sensible when he submits to injury rather than acts as if he served a God who is a Persecutor.

So too in the case of love—that is, the giving of justice rather than the fighting for one's rights. True, the fight for rights has brought advance, but only because men with outgrown privileges have not been wise enough to practice conciliation. But supposing Great Britain had followed the advice of Burke and had made concessions to the American colonies! How much more did the French Revolution permanently accomplish than was given freely in the surrender of August 4, 1789? Who can tell the advantages which have come to Japan because the last Shogun preferred to surrender rather than fight for the rights he had inherited? Or, to compare small things with great, how many of us have not been advised by lawyers that while we have a good case it would be cheaper to bear a loss than to establish our claim? Is this advice any less sensible when it comes from Jesus?

The process of history is a commentary on the worth of these principles of Jesus.

Humanity is not headed toward Ab the Caveman, but toward Jesus Christ the Son of Man. Jesus is a teacher ahead of his time, pointing out the goal rather than the next step, to be judged not by his own day or by our day, but by the whole course of human history.

Let us pass on this word of cheer. When we follow Jesus we are not following impracticable theories into a land of dreams. We are following good sense. In a world that is only partially sane we are anticipating the sanity of eternity. Let us therefore be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, inasmuch as we know that our work is not in vain in the Lord.